

I am committed to leading the fight to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons by Iran. I stand with President Obama in the conviction that Iran's possession of nuclear weapons is unacceptable and I stand behind his determination to seek a diplomatic solution to this issue.

In the 109th Congress, I authored a resolution calling on Iran to fulfill its nuclear obligations. Further, in the 110th Congress, I was again a proud co-sponsor of the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act, which employs sanctions and economic incentives to prevent Iran from securing nuclear weapons.

In the 111th Congress, I spoke out forcefully about the urgent need to deal with the looming threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. On October 14, 2009, I voted in favor of the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act, which authorizes state and local governments to divest from companies investing in Iran's petroleum and natural gas sector and protects fund managers who divest from such companies from potential lawsuits. I have also supported several other measures, including the Iran Threat Reduction Act and the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, to reinforce American diplomatic efforts with the threat of tougher sanctions if Iran continues to enrich uranium in defiance of the international community.

On May 7, 2009, I co-sponsored the Iran Diplomatic Enhancement Act of 2009. This legislation seeks to back American efforts to engage with Iran by expanding the threat of economic sanctions to limit Iran's ability to import and produce refined petroleum. This bill requires the President to impose two or more sanctions from a menu of penalties to any person or entity "engaged in an activity, including production, brokerage, insurance, and tanker delivery services, that could contribute to Iran's ability to import refined petroleum resources." Our window of effective diplomacy is starting to close and sanctions are imperative to achieve effective negotiations with Iran.

On July 1, 2010, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 was signed into law by President Obama. I am proud to have voted in favor of this bill, which aims to stifle Iran's energy sector, restrict Tehran's ability to conduct international financial transactions, and hamper its ability to obtain components for its nuclear and missile programs.

As the threat of Iran gaining nuclear weapons looms, we must also continue to focus our energy on the considerable human rights violations which persist under the Ayatollah's regime.

In the last Congress, following the disputed re-election of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, I received the "2009 Defenders of Freedom Award" from the Council for a Democratic Iran (CDI) and was recognized for my service and commitment to human rights, democracy, and freedom. Thus far in the 112th Congress, I co-sponsored H. Res. 60, a resolution urging Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to remove the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) from the Department of State's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Since 2001, MEK has ceased its violent activities against the Iranian regime and its mission is to seek freedom, democracy, and human rights for the people of Iran. Tens of thousands of MEK members have been jailed, tortured, and executed by the Iranian regime. Additionally, last October, at least 70 people were killed during a siege on Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad making it the worst massacre of Iraqi Christians since 2003. On March 10, 2011, I co-sponsored H.R. 440, which would require the administration to appoint a special envoy for religious minorities in the Near East and South and Central Asia.

Other nations in the region, from Morocco to Saudi Arabia, share a common interest in stopping the spread of Iranian nuclear weapons. The United States must work with Iran's neighbors and our allies to hold a firm line against the acquisition of these dangerous, destabilizing weapons. At the same, we must continue to support the Iranian people's efforts to reform their government to respect the rights of all citizens. The global community has a duty to act and we must not shirk that responsibility.